1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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TWO VILLAGE CHIEFS

[facing p. 46]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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565 chiefly political, economic, occupational, and educational.[1] But so is the widest constellation defined on the basis of similarity or diversity of conduct—culture. The essence of social class lies in the specific fashion in which these various factors appear combined. To understand it fully we must view social class under two aspects. The first is that of firmly established and comparatively permanent differences in actual conduct—differences in standards of living, in habitual behaviour, occupation, and moral values.[2] The second aspect is that of the social agency which attaches to these differences of conduct the index 'inferior' or 'superior', and makes them reflect different grades on a common scale of values. Were we dealing only with differences of the first order we should be describing merely different cultural groups in which life is lived in different fashion, in which different customs are observed and different values valid. What turns mere cultural differences into differences of conduct typical of social class is the loss or absence of their self-contained and largely unconscious nature. Their permanence is no longer, as it were, self-chosen. The 'cultural' differences are now conceived of as results of unequal advantage and opportunity, and they are never allowed to lose their significance as different grades in the 'common scale'. It lies in the nature of things that this common scale, which depends essentially on the demonstrability of unequal opportunities, should rest above all on political and economic factors. The essence of class (as of any group) lies in the consciousness of group membership; the consciousness of class is the consciousness of this 'common scale of values'.

Let us examine first the social mechanism which maintains and propagates the consciousness of the common scale. It is essentially an educational mechanism (in the widest sense of the word). While perpetuating the various cultural traits characteristic of social class it perpetuates at the same time the common perspective from which these traits are set off as traits valued more or less highly by the society. One of the most efficient instruments of this mechanism is the convention of class symbolism and class etiquette, which not only regulates the intercourse between the classes, but also serves to demonstrate the reality of class barriers.

Nupe society is plentiful in such symbols of class distinction. The collective name for nobility, *rowni*, 'turban', marks already one of these outward signs of class: it refers to the turban of glazed blue cloth which only members of the nobility may wear. Another prerogative of rank is the right to carry a sword, or rather, have it carried by one's sword-bearer, the *zagi* (lit. 'little person', i.e. 'page'), and to appear on horseback on all official occasions. With regard to these emblems of rank the Nupe have kept abreast of the times: a novel symbol of status is an alarum clock, put in a little wooden case, which body-servants of men of rank carry after their masters.

[291]

[1] M. Ginsberg, *Sociology*, 1934, p. 162.

[2] Cf. M. Ginsberg, op. cit., p. 159: 'To the outward observer class is primarily a matter of behaviour, speech, dress, education, and especially habits of social intercourse.'

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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565 517 184 people of Bida professional women singers, accompanied by their own drummers, perform for an audience which pays for its pleasures. The uneducated pagans like to sit together on afternoons and evenings in front of their houses, chat or weave mats, or just enjoy the peace of these hours of leisure. The educated Mohammedans meet in the house of a Mallam and read with him the holy books of Islam, using even their leisure hours for furthering their education.

565 291 184 As regards dress: a man of standing would always, even in the privacy of his home, wear trousers and the flowing white robe, and would never appear before guests and strangers without turban. Peasants and commoners normally wear a loin-cloth and a blue cloth thrown over the shoulder, and the blue Phrygian cap which is said to be the traditional head-gear of Nupe. Only on state occasions would they don robe and turban.

565 177 184 304 195 People of rank have adopted, with Mohammedanism, many features of Hausa culture. In their families the Hausa custom of removing the uvula of small children is practised—a custom absent among the lower classes and unknown among the peasants. They are fond of using Hausa words and phrases; for expressions concerning the delicate topic of sex they invariably use Hausa or Arabic circumlocutions. They despise the peasants and uneducated people of the lower classes who use the crude literal expression, and who cannot embellish their speech with the more elegant phrases borrowed from Hausa.

565 184 The various features enumerated above are clearly not of the same order. Characteristic though they are of the standards valid in the different strata of Nupe society they are not equally reducible to the central facts of class structure—political and economic conditions. The evaluation of certain habits as inferior or superior is as much a matter of convention as a result of social or economic inequality. That the poor man cannot afford meat or chicken-and-rice is due to his poverty; but the preference for milled or unmilled grain or for palm-wine or sorghum-beer respectively, is a matter of taste and habit, i.e. a 'cultural' trait pure and proper. Yet rendered permanent by education, linked with habitual group-behaviour which in other, more vital, spheres of life positively reflects economic or social prerogatives, these smaller traits, too, gain the significance of class-determined behaviour. Here we grasp another aspect of class differentiation. I have said that where the attribute of inferiority or superiority is disregarded, differences of habit and living conditions in general are reduced to cultural differences in the narrow sense. This gains special significance in a society like Nupe, which has grown out of a conglomerate of various tribal groups, each with its own more or less specific culture. Some of the food habits of the 'poor' peasants are indeed the original food habits of cultural groups which have been incorporated into the kingdom. I have mentioned that the Phrygian cap, worn by peasants and commoners, is regarded as the traditional head-dress of the country. Their 'uncouth' manners, their 'primitive' customs, are part of the pagan peasant culture of the country. Similarly turban and flowing robes, or the appreciation of professional musicians and Mohammedan learning, reflect the preferences of a specific cultural

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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COURT HOUSE IN BIDA

THE *ALKALI* OF MOKWA

[Facing p. 170]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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This reluctance must be regarded as one of the main factors responsible for the growth of the institution of 'borrowing land', which we have described in the preceding chapter.

Sowing and Planting

The Nupe, possessing an elaborate calendar system which works with six seasons and twelve lunar months, have no difficulty in determining the coming of the rainy season. Besides, they regard the appearance (in April) of a small red insect, which is significantly called *gbama*, 'early rains', as a sign of the approaching rains. The first light showers, which as a rule are accompanied by thunderstorms, are ignored. After the first heavy rain, which may last for several hours or a whole night, has thoroughly softened the soil, village and town spring into activity. In the morning after the rain you will see the people wandering out to their fields. They walk in groups, neighbours or families together, fathers with their boys. Dogs trot behind their masters, and often a man or boy will lead a goat which will then feed on leaves and shrubs on the field. The men wear working dress: a loin-cloth and, if it is cold, a heavier cloth slung round the shoulders, and a straw hat as protection from the sun. They carry their hoe over the shoulder, and gourds with water, food and seeds, over the arm. In many parts farmers carry their bows and arrows with them when they go out to their fields as 'protection from wild beasts'—a habit which is dying out but slowly, although there is hardly any need for it to-day. I have never seen these weapons used.

The nature of the first farming activity depends on whether or not the farmer has done what 'good' farmers are expected to do, namely, planted his yams already in the rains, immediately after the harvest. If he has not done so he will now at once start preparing his yam field; if he has, he is free to turn his attention to the planting of bulrush-millet and maize. Of five farmers whose daily activities I was recording in Mokwa, three had planted yam in the rainy season and two (who both had to work single-handed) waited until the beginning of the new farming season. With the 'good' farmer, we will start with the planting of millet.

Again there are certain variations. Where millet and sorghum are planted as successive crops no hoeing or re-hoeing as a rule precedes the planting; as we shall see later the plots are normally prepared during the previous season. Where millet and sorghum are planted after other first-year crops or on a new plot, ridging, occupying the first few days of the new season, precedes the sowing. The technique of planting, moreover, varies slightly according to whether one plants on mounds or ridges, but is the same for both millet varieties and for sorghum. I will now describe the scene one will meet on the Nupe fields when planting is in progress. The farmer has divested himself of his superfluous clothing, his food and water gourds, and has placed his things out of the way, under a shady tree. Perhaps he has his small boys with him, whom he lets play by themselves in a corner of the field while he goes on with his work. Tied to his left arm the planter carries the seeds in a small

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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EFAKÓ WORK ON A FARM NEAR BIDA

[134]

FARMING *EGBE*

[Facing p. 248]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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MAT-WEAVERS ON THEIR WAY HOME FROM THE FARM

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A MACHINE TAILOR

[facing p. 290]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

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AN OLD POTTER WOMAN

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THE WOMEN'S LOOM

[facing p. 296]

1; Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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ONE OF THE *ETSU'S KAKATI* PLAYERS

A PROFESSIONAL SINGER WITH HER BAND

[Facing p. 300]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

the minds of the older generation (though it is unable to enforce its authority), and they will be present, we may assume, also in the minds of the young men themselves when they reach a more mature age and understanding.

The economic demands which we must list under the second heading—demands implied in duties towards the community—are comparatively light. In village economy they are embodied in the regular contributions to village rituals in money or kind, and in occasional gifts to the chief (mostly gifts of kola-nuts or produce, worth between 3*d.* and 6*d.*). To give an example of the former: the total cost of a village ritual of moderate dimensions comes to 10*s.*, which sum would be divided among, say, twenty households. But rituals may also be celebrated both more lavishly, and on a much smaller scale, with a cost between 3*s.* and 6*s.*[1] In Bida we have again certain expenses entailed in religious obligations—alms to Mallams, the traditional killing of a ram on the day of the *Sallah* or, occasionally, labour and money spent on the building of one of the small mosques in which neighbours and relatives worship.[2] Logically, tax should have been listed in this group of expenses.

The last group of 'cultural requirements'—personal wants—is the most fluid and the most difficult to outline. It follows most closely economic stratification and the varying standards of living. As we shall see later, almost every want in this group is seen against the standards set by the social *élite* of the country. In certain respects, however, we can attempt to define certain minimum wants even in this field. Thus every family head is expected to possess, in addition to his simple working clothes, at least one 'good' dress, a dark-blue or white gown, in which he would appear at meetings in the house of the chief and at various ceremonial occasions. Similarly he should own a white turban in addition to the straw hat or cap which he wears on the farm, ornamented sandals of leather, and a stick or carved staff to carry about; he should wear a heavy glass bangle round the arm, possibly a finger-ring and various charms of the kind that are sold by Hausa traders on the markets of the country.[3] A major failure to achieve these standards of personal requirements is regarded as a sign of poverty and disgrace. Often have I listened to old men complaining about the sad state of affairs which compelled them to be content with a shabby cloth or cap when gown and turban were more fitting to their age and status.

But here we must take into account that cultural 'rift' between urban and rural standards of which I have spoken earlier in this chapter. Many wants which either do not exist, or do not exist in the same urgency, in the village are considered essential in Bida. Here the closeness of the social *élite*, both in the literal sense of the word and in the sense of existing social contacts, raises the standards of living. In Bida, where one

[1] See my article on the *Gunnu*, p. 99, n. 2.

[2] The building itself is done by the people, the roofing and thatching by the professional builders of Bida. The costs were, in a concrete case, 10*s.*, and were divided among five households.

[3] These charms consist of a piece of paper supposed to be inscribed with a verse of the Koran or a Mohammedan formula of blessing, which is sewn in leather, and worn round the arm or neck.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

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A BIDA MALLAM AND ONE OF HIS PUPILS

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AN AGE-GRADE ASSOCIATION DANCE

[facing p. 382]

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7. *Nddduma* sacrifice on the Niger

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6. *Žiba* sacrifice

[p. 38(R)]

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

20. A noted medicine expert and 'wise man' from Jebba

21. The dance of the *ndakó gboyá*

[p. 134 (2)]
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2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

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22. The *Sagi* of Kpatsuwa

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23. *Gugu* dance of the Yoruba

[p. 134 (B)]

CULTURAL FEATURES AND THE LIFE CYCLE

Physical Characteristics: Tribal Marks: Dress

142 While the aboriginal Nupe sub-tribes (Ebe, Beni Ebagi, and Bataci) are negro in appearance, there are indications of considerable non-negro elements in their ancestry. A striking type with oval face, high cheekbones, and slightly mongoloid eyes is often found among those of mixed Fulani descent.

181 The Nupe are known all over Nigeria as an industrious and formerly warlike people. They are progressive and anxious to try new methods, e.g., in agriculture. The women are keen and successful traders.

634 There are no facial marks common to the Nupe people as a whole, but sub-
304 tribes are distinguished to some extent. Many sub-tribes have to-day adopted "Bida" marks in addition to their own.

291 Commoners wear a loincloth, with a blue cloth thrown over the shoulder and
565 the blue phrygian cap, said to be the traditional headgear of the Nupe. Nobles and other well-to-do men wear trousers and a flowing white robe and turban.[1]

Birth

843 The rituals surrounding childbirth begin at the time of conception and culminate in the naming ceremony. As soon as the pregnancy becomes noticeable (generally in the third to the fifth month) the parents must discontinue sexual relations and the mother must avoid places inhabited by spirits and abstain from eating certain foods which are thought to have a harmful effect on the unborn child. Special rules or avoidances may be prescribed by the diviner whom the father will consult immedi-
844 ately, and again at the beginning of the confinement and before the naming ceremony. The father keeps away during the actual birth, his elder sister, mother, or other kinswoman assisting the mother, and his father or father's brother cutting the
851 umbilical cord and disposing of the afterbirth, which is buried outside the hut. Thereafter the child's paternal grandfather plays a more important part than the father, announcing the birth of his grandchild and receiving congratulations.

553 The naming ceremony (*suna*) usually takes place eight days after the birth.
852 It is traditionally preceded, on the seventh day, by a libation of beer to the ancestor thought to be reborn in the child. The name used always to be announced by the child's grandfather before a group of relatives, without any particular ceremonial. To-day, however, with the spread of Islam, the announcement is usually made by a mallam. It is at this time also that the child's hair is cut and the tribal marks scratched on the cheeks and forehead.[2]

845 Twins are generally welcomed, but infants born with teeth are regarded as a bad omen.[3]

Circumcision

304 Circumcision (*zuy'ba*) is universal, but it does not appear to be regarded as one of the more important rituals. It is performed on boys individually, between the ages of 8 and 11, whenever the father thinks fit, by a barber, who is usually paid sixpence or a shilling. Women must be away from the house when it is done, otherwise there is no ceremonial.[4]

No corresponding ceremony is reported for girls.

[1] Nadel, op cit., pp. 25, 237, 362, 405–6 (sketches of tribal marks); Meek, I, 1925, pp. 28–9; Line, 1947.
[2] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 115–16
[3] Nadel, personal communication; Malam Aliyu Bida, Ms. Notes.
[4] Nadel, op cit., p. 116.

6: Anonymous U-4 (no date)1956
FF52 Nupe FF52
Bida

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Images and bracelets of metal and glass,
soup spoons of aluminium, all made in Bida

Glass-workers of Bida

6: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1956

FF52 Nupe FF52

Bida

Workers in brass and silver. The goat-skin bellows are similar to those of the glass-makers

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[P. 142]

6: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1956
FF52 Nupe FF52
Bida

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Punching designs on brass bowls.
No trace of the pattern is made before the punch work starts

9:Nadel E-5 (1934-1935) 1935 FF52 Nupe FF52

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778

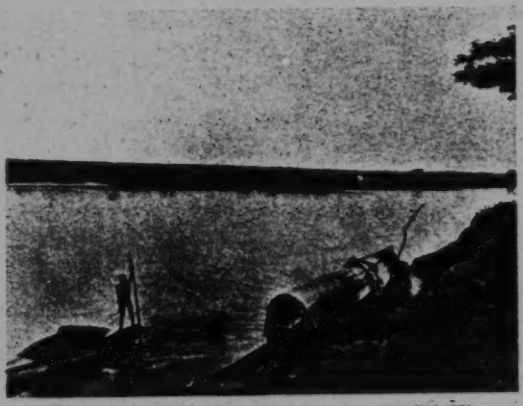

FIG. 1. LANDING-PLACE AT GBEBE, ONE OF THE LNDU VILLAGES.

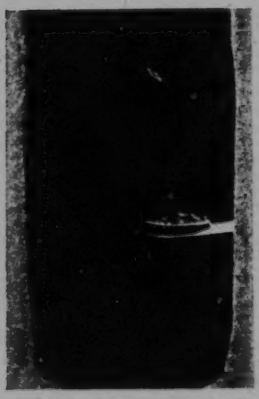

FIG. 2. THE "CHAIN OF TOGBIN."

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FIG. 3. THE SACRED BOGBIN FIGURES AT JEBBA.

FIG. 4. VILLAGE CHIEF WITH *ikoki* TOGBIN.

THE KING'S HANGMEN IN CENTRAL NIGERIA.

[Facing page 129]

6: Buchanan K-5 (ca. 1952)1953 MS12 Hausa MS12
Tiv FF57
Fulani MS11
Kanuri MS14
Nupe FF62
H
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FIG. 11—Hausa villagers, Zaria Province. The Hausa are numerically the major tribal group in the Region; racially, they show a predominance of sudanese Negro elements.

FIG. 12—A pagan hunter of the Jos Plateau. These primitive people appear to have some Negrito elements.

FIG. 13—Nupe villagers, Niger Province. This group from one small village reflects racial complexity of parts of the Region—tall sudanese Negro, stocky forest Negro, and person of Arab descent.

FIG. 14—Tiv of Benue Province. The Tiv, predominant people of the Middle Belt, appear to have racial affinities with the peoples of the southeastern forest rather than with the peoples of the northern plains.

FIG. 15—A Kanuri of Borno Province. The Kanuri are a hybrid group, of mixed Negro-Caucasian origin.

FIG. 16—Fulani of the Bauchi region. Fulani ancestry is Caucasian, reflected in brown skin, wavy hair, and narrow nose. Today they show results of intermarriage with Negro neighbors.